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ABSTRACT

Economic education in the United States is a must since this discipline deals with a fundamental consistent problem -- uses and allocation of limited resources. Scarcity of resources in contrast to a man's unlimited wants requires that individuals make intelligent decisions and choices which will be reflected in the marketplace, voting booth, and at work. Economics is a natural for teaching because economic principles, curriculum, and skills are relevant and applicable to the person, family, classroom, community, and social concerns of youngsters. Schools have an obligation to offer economic programs since this institution reaches children who can be equipped to be economically responsible citizens. Essential responsibilities for economic education in the 1970s are to make economic education more relevant, responsible, exciting, and systematic. To meet these responsibilities current programs are emerging that: 1) Stress relevant, vital issues of concern to society, and manpower and personal economics; 2) Analyze and evaluate economic education materials; 3) Emphasize exciting teaching techniques; and 4) Focus on the development of a master plan using a systematic approach for the improvement of economic education. The organizational machinery for economic education is being strengthened by having an affiliated Council functioning effectively in each state and at least two Centers for economic education functioning effectively in each state. (SJM)

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SPEAKER: Dr. George L. Fersh, Associate Director Joint Council on Economic Education

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SP005 930

Our Stake in Economic Education

The schools of the United States have a great responsibility for economic education. And the American people have a great stake in how well the schools meet this responsibility.

Economic education is a must because the discipline of economics deals with a fundamental problem which man has always faced and will always face -- how the individual, or the society of which he is a part, allocates and uses limited resources in order to satisfy unlimited wants.

Man has never had all the materials and services he needed to satisfy his biological, psychological, social, and spiritual drives. To keep alive and to improve his quality of living, man has had to be ingenious. He has had to develop abilities within himself in order to make use of the limited resources provided by nature. He has had to discover, develop and refine procedures of cooperation.

This is what economics has been about in the past; this is what economics is about today; and this is what economics will be about in the future. Since resources are inadequate to meet man's unlimited wants, the individual and the society must answer some basic questions; What is really needed? What is wanted beyond basic needs? What is available to meet the needs and wants? How can we organize to meet our needs and wants? What priorities or adjustments should there be to accommodate the inadequacies? What can the individual do about the situation? With answers to such questions, we can develop what is called an economic way of life -- the goods and services consumed; the kinds of jobs and the machines; the money, credit, and banking procedures; the trade practices; and the government actions.

To the extent individuals are educated concerning the choices available and the consequences of these choices, they and their society are able to secure the best possible economic results from the conditions they face. Therefore, economic education is a must.

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Economic education is particularly essential for the American people. Under our economic and political system, we depend on the judgment of all citizens in making decisions. Each individual has an opportunity to indicate what he considers to be the needs and wants that should be met by the economic system. He does this by the use of his dollars for goods or services; he does this by the use of his ballot in electing people to office because of their economic views; and he does this by the quality of his performance as a wage earner. Thus, in the marketplace, in the voting booth, and at his place of work, the individual helps to make basic decisions about what resources shall be tapped, what investments shall be made, what regulations shall exist, and what taxes shall be levied.

To fail to provide economic education for all means that our individual and group decisions shall not have the wisdom required for optimum economic satisfaction.

This opportunity and responsibility of the individual in economic decision-making does not exist in nations where central planning groups or hierarchies make the decisions. In those nations, the fundamental decisions of how limited resources shall be allocated to meet unlimited demands are made by the few. Thus, it is the few who need and obtain economic education in those nations.

Economic education in our nation is now more urgent than ever. In earlier years, it was possible for us to afford the luxury of occasional unwise economic decisions. We were blessed with abundant key natural resources such as land, water, forests, and minerals. Individuals and society could make mistakes and maintain a high standard of living. Being Because our responsibilities and links to the outside world were limited, errors in economic decisions were largely our own concern. We were concerned with how well we were doing or what others thought about our performance.

Today, conditions are different. Internally, we are faced with an increasing population that must have its new and greater needs met and for whom the economic system must provide work. Not only must we meet these responsibilities successfully for the welfare of our citizens, but a new factor has been added. The eyes of the world are on us. Demonstrations of strength and stability by our economy will encourage emerging nations to develop economic systems compatible with ours. Demonstrations of weakness or instability will deter others from our approach.

Our economy must be strong because of the increasing economic competition we face in world trade. Western Europe, Japan, and Soviet Union are making great strides in economic efficiency and growth. Their progress means that markets could be lost for American producers, and sources of raw materials could be lost for our economy. Such a development could depress our economy and standard of living. Economic education in our schools and colleges can lay the foundations for future decision-making that will enable us to retain leadership in the world economy.

Our economy must be strong so that we can maintain the military posture which world tension makes necessary. A lack of economic growth and an increase in unemployment would reduce the capacity of our people to provide the taxes necessary for military defense. Curtailments in expenditures for research and development could be fatal if the situation should worsen. Indeed, a posture of economic weakness could lead to agression against us.

The degree of freedom of choice we have in both the political and economic realms is intertwined with our nation's economic well-being. Periods of economic instability, unemployments, and maladjustment breed arbitrary and coercive approaches to action. In a world beset by appeals and programs for revolutionary change, it is urgent that our economy justify a faith in progress and freedom.

Although we recognize the urgency of economic education, we must also remember that economic matters are complex. Deciding how to allocate limited resources to meet unlimited demands involves many considerations -- the obligations and effects of the "cold war" must be weighted; the accelerations of scientific and technological developments must be fitted into the picture; a more interdependent society must be considered; a changing population composition must be identified; the economics of urbanism and regional development must be noted; a complicated trade picture must be considered; automation must be fitted into our economic system; and the expansion of communication and transportation must be recognized. Such complexities require that economic education have not only a place, but a significant place in the general education of all our students.

The Teaching of Economics

Economics possess the ingredients that make it a natural for teaching. The student and his family are involved constantly in discussions and action related to their standard of living, their vocations, their savings and investments for the future, their purchases and budgeting, and the ups and downs of the broad economy. An area of knowledge that provides background and insights to help them deal more effectively with such practical matters has great appeal. Teachers find it easy to develop links between the classroom and personal and social concerns.

Teachers and students have abundant and diverse economic sourse materials. Private enterprises such as insurance companies, banking and credit companies, industries, and distributing agencies provide materials. Materials are also available from labor and agricultural interests. The various levels of government are sources for pertinent information on economic matters. Other sources are textbooks, pamphlets, and audio-visual aids of many kinds.

There are firsthand laboratory situations to which classroom study can be applied. There are economic activities and issues illustrated in home, school and classroom, and community situations. There are opportunities to visit local enterprises and to utilize the practical experiences of people engaged in all kinds of economic activities.

Another ingredient that attracts teachers to this area of education is its convenient and realistic relation to many aspects of the curriculum. Throughout the elementary school program, economics deserves emphasis in units dealing with the home, community, state, nation, and people of other lands. At all levels of education, economic developments and principles belong in social studies courses. It is also natural and essential to draw upon economics in teaching business, home economics industrial arts, and humanities courses.

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Economic education is ideally suited to develop the skills that come from experiences in problem-solving and the satisfactions that come from experiences in taking action with the knowledge gained. This subject area is filled with personal and social problems of concern to students that can lead to intense study and concrete action. Properly guided, students can learn to recognize and define controversial issues and alternative choices. They can carry out research and learn to evaluate sources of varying validity. They can gain an appreciation of different frames of reference and the significance of different value systems. And they can learn about the soundness of different courses of action. This is education at its best.

From years of experience, broad guidelines are offered to teachers engaged in developing economic education programs and in teaching economics. Economic education should be consistent with sound educational principles and procedures. Learning should be developmental, with understanding and skills in economics contributed at each grade level in a systematic way. While economics should add a dimension of reality, understanding, and purpose to many secondary school courses, students should be offered a comprehensive course in economics in their senior year.

Economic education should be consistent with the school's obligation for academic responsibility. Since shcools reach the children of all people, they have a greater obligation than any other institutional group to be objective and accurate. The views of all segments of the economy must be respected and accorded consideration in the presentation of economics. Teachers have an obligation to provide economic insignts and data which are accurate and in keeping with current understanding.

Economic education should be related to the environment and needs of students so that learning can be applied to real situations. The economic community has much to gain as the schools develop students who are able to act more effectively in their economic capacities and decision-making responsibilities.

Here then are the crucial stakes and rewarding potentials for teachers of economics. Through coordinated programs, the potentials for economic education can become a reality and our nation can become better equipped to achieve the economic greatness which our times demand.

Essential Responsibilities for Economic Education in the 1970s

The general responsibilities for the economic education movement remain what they have been from the beginning: to do whatever is necessary to develop an increasing number of qualified teachers, to make available for them improved resource materials, and to provide for a continuing exchange among them of the most effective techniques for teaching economics. This is essentially what the programs of the Joint Council, affiliated Councils, Centers, and Cooperating Schools are all about.

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Yet, to achieve these objectives in the 1970s requires that all of those engaged in economic education take to hear particular conditions and responsibilities which face us in these unique times.

(1) Economic Education Must Be Relevant. What we set out to teach should focus on subject matter of genuine concern to students and should be identifiable with the world which the students knows; furthermore, what we teach should be relevant in that the student can see how the knowledge we are urging him to gain will applied usefully by him either immediately or in direct relation for dealing with other concerns he has. To do this implies and even demands that we use our guide for what is relevant to remove everything that is irrelevant from what we set out to teach so that we can eliminate diversions of time, energy, and motivation.

(2) Economic Education Must Be Responsible. What we set out to teach and the manner in which we teach must be accurate, objective, and honest. The nature of economics and economic issues demand the criteria of scholarship and this should include the presentation and identification of facts, opinions, values, and frames of reference which can contribute to a full and fair analysis by students. Furthermore, being responsible in economic education requires that we should be accountable for what we are setting out to teach and how well we perform in meeting the objectives we set forth. Both the students who are our customers and the public which provides funds have a right and responsibility to examine our objectives and to evaluate our accomplishments.

(3) Economic Education Must Be Exciting. In the teaching that we do we should make use of whatever techniques and technology will enhance our chances for capturing and holding the interest of students, and, of course, of imparting the knowledge we set out to provide. What is exciting can vary from the quiet expression or demonstration of a profound insight to the clash of conflicting views; from an oral presentation that is attuned carefully to the wavelength of student concerns to the use of color and sound that has purposeful, lasting impact. Furthermore, a key ingredient for injecting excitement into learning is to provide for the involvement of the student in the learning process as a creative, individualized experience; that is, he has recognized what he wanted to learn, has participated in determining how it might be learned, and then has discovered that he has succeeded in learning what he set out to achieve.

(4) Economic Education Must Be Systematic. The economic education movement faces the reality of allocating resources wisely among competing demands and this calls for an analytical, systematic procedure to make decisions and

achieve objectives. There is an urgent need on the national level to identify clearly the prime objectives for the economic education movement; determine priorities among them; discern the process and tools needed; carry out the process and develop the tools; institute programs to achieve the objectives; and throughout the process to measure and amend where necessary so the objectives are achieved. All of this should be done in accordance with a master plan, involving sequential steps and coordination among the economic education movement's component parts: Joint Council, affiliated Councils, Centers for Economic Education; Cooperating School Systems.

Current and Emerging Programs to Meet the Responsibilities

In terms of the particular responsibilities delineated above, the following programs and procedures are either underway or emerging:

(1) Relevant. The guidelines for teaching economic analysis and substance which were developed in the National Task Force Report remain as the core for economic education programs but greater relevancy is being achieved by using the teaching of economics as a vehicle for providing an understanding of current issues and for demonstrating how the individual can apply the economics he has learned. A major tool developed by the Joint Council to aid teachers to do this is the Economic Topics Series (i. e. Economics of Pollution; Economic Stabilization Policies; Taxation; Economics of Poverty; Economics of Crime; Economics of Population; Economics of The Seven Seas; Economics of Defense). Allied to this tool is Project Econologue, which is being launched by Councils and Centers throughout the nation. The purpose of this project is to aid high schools and colleges to organize and conduct discussions on vital economic issues of concern to students and society.

Relevancy is also being achieved through the development of high school courses focused on Manpower Economics, Personal Economics, and Ecology. Research is being carried on to develop economics courses particularly designed to meet the interests and needs of students in the Inner City environments. At the collegiate level, courses are being developed using case study analyses of pertinent subjects and issues.

(2) Responsible. A continuing function of economic education workshops and courses for teachers is to provide guidelines and techniques for being accurate, objective, and honest in teaching. Throughout the year, the Joint Council examines materials developed by a wide variety of sources to determine their suitability and availability for use in classrooms and teacher education. In addition, two independent committees have been established to issue periodic reports on materials which they believe meet the recognized criteria for classroom use. The committees evaluate both printed and audio-visual materials. The committee for evaluating

printed materials functions through the Center for Economic Education at the University of Wisconsin and the audio-visual committee is based at Montclair State College in New Jersey. One of the outcomes of having these committees in continuous operation to issue reports is that the developers of materials are now more eager to seek guidance so their materials will have greater acceptance by responsible educators.

The facet of responsibility related to being accountable for performance is being achieved by the development of standardized evaluation instruments for the various levels of education. Knowledge of the availability of tests is available through the Center for Economic Education at the University of Minnesota and the tests can be purchased from the Joint Council on Economic Education. To stimulate and guide evaluation and research, the Joint Council now has a staff member responsible for keeping abreast of all that is taking place and for aiding in the development of designs to evaluate and carry out research.

(3) Exciting. Although the individual teacher will always be an essential ingredient for helping to bring excitement to the learning process, study materials and teaching tools can be very helpful. In that regard, guidance and cooperation are being extended to teachers and producers to increase the availability of books, films, film strips, transparencies, games, recordings, models, and programmed learning. Courses and workshops are being conducted to demonstrate the use of such tools, as well as such methods as the use of role-playing, field trips, debates, and model-building. Teachers are being guided to allocate a greater role for students in the development of courses of study, selection and procurement of resource personnel and study materials, and the application of class findings. The encouragement of exciting teaching experiences is being increased through the Kazanjian Awards Program For The Teaching of Economics and dissemination is accomplished through the annual publication based on the award-winning teaching, Economic Education Experiences of Enterprising Teachers (available from the Joint Council on Economic Education). A depository of the best entries throughout the years is being maintained at Ohio University for loan to those engaged in teaching or responsible for teacher education. The results of exciting, effective teaching experiences can also be shared through the recently-launched Journal of Economic Education (published by the Joint Council).

(4) Systematic. The development of a master plan for the improvement of economic education as delineated previously in this paper should have the highest priority as we enter the year 1973. In the meantime, steps are being taken which are part of a systematic approach to meeting diverse needs. Annual national meetings and periodic regional meetings are serving to create awareness and cooperation among all those engaged in economic education. Out of such meetings have come specialized assignments for the Joint Council,

affiliated Councils and Centers, recognized to be in the common good. An annual conference devoted to present and potential research contributes to a rational allocation of resources to achieve and measure particular objectives.

To meet the need for qualified personnel as leaders in economic education, systematic sequences leading to Master's and Doctoral Degrees in Economic Education have been developed at such institutions as Purdue University and Ohio University.

On the national level and within states, working and communications relationships have been established with private, public, and professional groups so that there is a meshing of constructive activity in behalf of the objectives of the economic education movement. In keeping with this, State Departments of Education are being advised on the ways in which certification requirements and courses of study can fit into the over-all effort to improve economic understanding. There are increasing numbers of newsletters and other media for exchange of information which are helping those engaged in economic education to build upon each other's accomplishments, to avoid errors and wasteful experiences, to lessen overlap in activities, and to point up what can be done to make a contribution to the over-all effort.

Progress in Organizational Machinery for Economic Education

The original concept of having a decentralized organizational structure for the economic education movement appears to have continuing validity. However, steps are being taken to strengthen the component parts.

One organizational goal is to have an affiliated Council functioning effectively in each state. To that end, each Council is being helped to have the following ingredients: a Board of Directors including the most prestigious, dedicated, and responsible individuals who can be obtained to fill the categories proscribed in the Council charters; a competent staff, including at least a full-time director; a program of sufficient scope to meet all the objectives set for the improvement of economic education; a budget from diverse sources, on a broad and sustaining base, and in sufficient amounts to support a strong program; and a useful linkage to all other groups through whom the economic education program for the state can be improved and expanded.

A second organizational goal is to have at least two Centers for Economic Education functioning effectively in each state, with a greater number in the most populated states. To that end, each Center is being helped to have the following ingredients: an Advisory Board including the most strategic personnel of the institution from the pertinent Colleges or Departments in the University; a competent staff, including at least a full-time director; a program of sufficient scope to meet the needs of the institution and to be of service in behalf of Council objectives; an adequate budget to assure the basic operation of the Center and access to supplementary funds for particular projects and assignments; and a linkage to all other groups through whom the

economic education program and contribution of the Center can be improved and expanded.

At the national level, the objective is to work toward having the Joint Council function effectively and with assured continuity. To that end, it should include the following ingredients: a Board of Trustees comparable to the distinguished leaders now serving; a competent staff, including personnel recognized to be outstanding nationally for each facet of responsibility; a program of sufficient scope to provide appropriate services in behalf of Councils and Centers and to assure continuing innovation in behalf of the total effort; a budget of sufficient size to support the program and a reserve to assure continuity of operation; and linkage to all other groups to promote full utilization of their resources and full sharing of the Joint Council's output.

In the years ahead, the Joint Council will maintain its basic programs of service, innovation, coordination, and communication. However, as the economic education movement matures and expands, there are emerging emphases which will receive attention within that framework of responsibility. The Joint Council will work more directly to help develop and place personnel for leadership roles in economic education. The growth of the economic education movement necessitates an acceleration and increase in the exchange of information among all those who are involved. With the increasing demands to reach larger numbers of teachers and larger numbers of students, the Joint Council must increase its efforts to harness financial, personnel, and materials resources for support of all aspects of the program. The responsibilities of leadership for such an expanded effort makes it imperative that the Joint Council develop standards and designs for evaluation through which it can demonstrate what it and the entire economic education movement is accountable for and how well performance has measured up to promise.

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